



## Developing and Maintaining Training Stations

Vital to the success of any work-based learning program are [training stations](#) — employers who provide worksites for student-learners. Students will have different occupational and career objectives, requiring experiences appropriate to each of those objectives, thus many different training stations are needed. When students are matched with suitable training stations, the value of the work-based learning experience becomes apparent.

## Selecting Potential Training Stations

Training stations extend the school classroom as community learning environments, with employers providing key experiences to students in the work-based learning program. Appropriate experiences, employers, and potential training stations can be identified through a screening process using the following questions:

- Will this site provide experiences that relate appropriately to students' occupational objectives?
- Will the employer's staff and workers serve as good role models?
- Is the employer open and willing to cooperate with program requirements, including coordinator visits, evaluations, forms, reports, and supporting a training sponsor?
- Are current employees satisfied with and positive about the business?
- Are there legal, safe, and healthy working conditions?
- Does the employer support the work-based learning program?
- Does the employer provide methods, facilities, and equipment that reflect current industry standards?
- Does the employer have a positive reputation in the community as a respected and progressive business?
- Is the business an Equal Opportunity Employer?
- Does the business follow the guidelines established in the [training agreement and training plan](#)?
- Does business provide a fair compensation for student-trainees comparable to other entry-level workers?
- Can the employer provide a wide variety of tasks and work experiences that will enhance student-trainee education?
- Can the business provide on-going employment throughout the school year?
- Will the location of the business pose transportation problems for students?

## Establishing Training Stations

To answer these and other questions, teacher-coordinators should visit each employer. Call ahead and make an appointment to meet with the owner or manager, present a business card, and explain the work-based learning program. At this or subsequent meetings, teacher-coordinators have at least two objectives: to determine if the business is appropriate for a training station and, if it is, to gain the employer's willingness to participate in the work-based learning program.

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Discussions with potential employers and training sponsors should include the following information:

- Previous employer experience with work-based learning;
- Purpose and goals of work-based learning, and brief overview of operation;
- Benefits of work-based learning to employers and training stations;
- Employer's need for part-time workers and concerns about hiring students;
- Role of the teacher-coordinator;
- Expectations for the employer;
- Procedures for student interviews and evaluations.

Employers should be given a complete picture of the work-based learning program, especially how participating in the program will affect their businesses. Partnerships are more likely to be formed when the employers understand the program goals, the relationship of classroom instruction to on-the-job training, the respective roles of the teacher-coordinator and employer in providing student training, and the support services available for students and employers.

Recommendations for potential training stations can be found from many sources: including the work-based learning program advisory council; former and current training sponsors; the local Chamber of Commerce; professional organizations; school administrators and counselors; past and present students; labor union officials; employment agencies; community surveys; telephone and business directories; newspapers and other local media; as well as recommendations of friends and family.

## *Outline for Meeting with Employer to Establish a Training Station:*

- Introduce yourself and present a business card.
- Begin the meeting by explaining the purpose of your visit.
- Explain the purpose and features of the work-based learning program. Use a program brochure and/or leave one with the employer.
- Provide information about the students and their need for supervised work experiences. Individualize your presentation to the needs of the employer.
- Determine the interests, values, attitudes, and needs of the employer. Ask about the employer's attitude toward providing part-time employment for students.
- Answer employer questions about the program and its students.
  - Identify and respond to any employer concerns about hiring special needs students. Be prepared to answer questions about particular students, their personal traits and work aptitudes.
- Explain your role in helping employers provide support in training students.
- Explain the procedure for student application and job interviews.
- Obtain possible dates and times when the employer would interview students.
- Explain the follow-up procedures after student job interviews.

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- Thank the employer for the meeting time, interest, and cooperation with the program.
- Remind the employer when you plan to visit about the results of student program applications and job interviews.

## Student Placement

Appropriate placement of students in training stations is critical to their success and to the continued success of the work-based learning program. Students' career objectives are key factors when determining proper training stations, so teacher-coordinators must take time to get to know both students and employers in order to work with them effectively.

Placement success is enhanced when teacher-coordinators:

- Know the student and the employer thoroughly;
- First consider employers who have previously worked with work-based learning programs;
- Make every attempt to secure long-term, rather than seasonal, placements;
- Consider the hours of student employment to avoid conflicts with educational development and the law;
- Whenever possible, provide employers with multiple student candidates with similar career needs, so that employers feel they have a choice when hiring;
- Instruct students on proper procedures for job application, job interviewing, and follow-up after the interview;
- Assist students in arranging interviews;
- Leave the final selection of student-trainees up to the employer.

Students should not be encouraged to find their own jobs as a condition of admission into the work-based learning program. Although it may seem to reduce teacher-coordinator workload, a few of the obvious drawbacks of this arrangement are:

- Lack of employer understanding of training responsibility;
- Employer reluctance to cooperate in training plan design and student evaluation;
- Employer reluctance to adhere to school policies, safety and health laws, and child labor laws;
- Reduced student loyalty to program objectives;
- Occupational placement that is inappropriate to student career objectives;
- Reduced alliance between the school and training sponsor;
- Reduced loyalty between the student and the teacher-coordinator.

## Student Job Applications and Interviews

Teacher-coordinators should not assume that students know how to apply for jobs or how to properly conduct themselves during the job interview process. A job-seeking skills component

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can be included in the general-related instruction or teacher-coordinators can meet with students individually and in small groups to share information such as:

- Descriptions of businesses, job duties, salary and time expectations, and staffing;
- Proper creation of a resume and cover letter;
- Proper completion of job application forms;
- How to arrange a job interview;
- Proper attire for job interviews;
- Expectations about arrival time and promptness;
- How to create positive first impressions;
- Appropriate interview and communication techniques;
- How to close an interview.

Teacher-coordinators should work with students before sending them on job interviews, to ensure that students have the best chance of making it past the interview phase and into a positive employment position. Students are more likely to be hired when they have an opportunity to practice interviewing skills in role-playing sessions. Before they apply for jobs or arrange interviews, students should also write resumes and cover letters for various positions; teacher-coordinators should provide feedback about needed revisions and improvements to these documents.

## Training Stations Coordination Visits

By regularly visiting worksites and observing student-trainees, teacher-coordinators can address potential difficulties, provide feedback and encouragement, and keep students on track with the goals of the program. Regular visits can also help improve and/or maintain the effectiveness of training stations. Some training sponsors may be adept at providing on-the-job instruction to student-trainees, while other sponsors may be unaware of effective techniques and will benefit from information that teacher-coordinators can provide during regular visits. Consider the following guidelines:

- Conduct visits at times which are convenient to training sponsors and, preferably, when student-trainees are working, even if those times extend past the normal school day or hours.
- Make appointments with training sponsors for the first few visits, as necessary, or when preferred by the sponsor. Once rapport is established, teacher-coordinators may be able to get sponsor agreement for unannounced worksite visits.
- Visitation timing and design should minimize disruption to the workplace and workforce.
- Visit each training station at least once a month, especially during the beginning weeks of student placement.
- Make written records of training station visits to maintain accountability, continuity, and communication to student-trainees, parents, administrators, and employers.



- Be sure the coordination visits have a purpose, including:
  - correlating related instruction with on-the-job training;
  - coordinating training plans;
  - evaluating student progress;
  - resolving problems;
  - assessing the overall training environment; and
  - assisting the training sponsor with the training function.

## Continued Development of Training Station Sponsors

Working with a work-based learning student may be a new experience for many training sponsors. Although carefully selected because of their potential ability, training sponsors can be more effective in their educational role when they are supported to work with students and provide good job preparation.

Training sponsors may or may not be experienced supervisors who know how to relate to the students they supervise. By discussing human relations and communication issues with training sponsors, teacher-coordinators may help them become more successful in their relationships with students and to become better supervisors overall.

An effective development program for training sponsors is one good method of maintaining the support of employers. Providing on-going supervisor training to all interested businesses, both those that already provide good student training and those that need improvement, is a service to the community that can increase local business involvement in and commitment to the work-based learning program.

## Training Agreements

Training agreements are documents that outline the duties and responsibilities of all parties involved in a work-based learning experience: employers, teacher-coordinators, students, and parents. A business-like way to increase the effectiveness of the work-based learning program, training agreements should be used with every training station and student. While these agreements are not considered to be legal documents, they are vitally important and should be signed (with a copy retained) by each party. Specific features of training agreements include the following:

### *Basic Items*

- Statement of purpose;
- Non-discrimination statement;
- Signature lines for four parties involved;
- Beginning wages, starting employment date, and term of employment; and
- Unemployment tax exclusion statement.

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## *Employer Responsibilities*

- Provide training and supervision of student-trainee;
- Provide a variety of work experiences based on student progress;
- Provide both oral and written appraisals of student progress;  
Provide a minimum number of hours of employment per week on a regular basis during the school year. REMEMBER: State and federal guidelines differ for *maximum* hours students may work;
- Identify procedures to follow if student is absent from work or has discipline concerns at work;
- Hold a conference with the teacher-coordinator before dismissing a student;
- Comply with all state and federal regulations regarding child labor, wages, and address other employment-related legal issues;
- Establish insurance coverage via the school/parents/business; and
- Provide safety orientation.

## *Student-Trainee Responsibilities*

- Be honest, punctual, cooperative, and properly groomed;
- Adhere to attendance policies of both the employer and the school;
- Keep necessary records, as required by both the employer and school;
- Conform to rules and regulations as established by the employer;
- Communicate with the training sponsor and teacher-coordinator about all aspects of the work experience, including problems; and
- Discuss the employment situation with the teacher-coordinator before submitting resignation.

## *Teacher-Coordinator Responsibilities*

- Provide related instruction coordinated with the student's training station;
- Observe and coordinate student training through on-site observation and discussion;
- Provide student evaluation at appropriate times;
- Coordinate appropriate insurance coverage (medical and accident/liability);
- Assure/provide safety training; and
- Assure insurance coverage: medical/liability.

## *Parent Responsibilities (secondary school students only)*

- Assure student's transportation needs are met;
- Support both the employer and school in the work-based learning effort;
- Assume responsibility for student between leaving school and arriving at the training station; and
- Assure insurance coverage for student (medical)

Teacher-coordinators should meet in person with the employer and training sponsor to review and sign the training agreement. Personal meetings with students and their parents will also be valuable in achieving success of the agreement and the work experience.



## Training Agreements vs Training Plans

Training agreements should not be confused with training plans. *Training agreements* are the documents that describe the general terms under which employers, schools, and students will complete a work experience. *Training plans* are the specific outlines of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students should acquire at the training station during the term of the training agreement. A Sample Training Agreement is shown in Section D: Resources, Sample Forms.